



THE LOCAL HEALTH LINK

Stimulating Shorts from Frankfort

Commissioner's Holiday Greetings

- *submitted by Rice C. Leach,
MD, Commissioner, Dept
for Public Health*

Thank you, all of you, for the things you have done to help Kentucky's public health organizations through a really challenging year. All of us know that unrelenting forces beyond our control are creating unprecedented changes and they are doing it without much time to plan. It's like responding to an epidemic except that there are no cases. Everyone is running in the red zone, everyday brings more urgently urgent work. None of us

has time to do the quality job we would prefer. The place seems to be going nuts.

But is it? Outbreaks are being assessed, worm infested water systems are back on line, regulations are being written to implement extraordinarily contentious legislation, and restaurants and on-site waste systems are less likely to be the cause of public health outbreaks. Newborn screening keeps on trucking, new activities to support families and children are coming on line, and hundreds of children who were previously uninsured will benefit from good health insurance. Kentucky is stepping up to the plate in an increasingly formal fashion on tobacco control and women's health is coming to the foreground. The health booth at the state fair was a bigger hit than last year and our immunization coverage is back up.

Strategic planning and information systems planning have progressed well. There are over 300 more people using new or enhanced computers on an enhanced network of servers with access to the DPH Intranet. Four local health departments are on line with access to more information than I have. Several counties have started talking with their local doctors about the best way to manage local health issues and we are working with several groups of doctors to improve our tracking system and the laws necessary to implement them. State and local health department nurses have developed a local health department assessment tool, have applied it in several places, and have begun to train nurses and others in population health services. Finally, in the midst of all this turmoil, we found time to formally recognize individual and group achievement through

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the Department for Public Health Employee Awards Program.

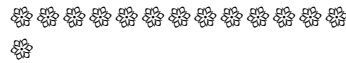
None of this has come easily. It represents hard work by dedicated public health workers who were already hustling just to keep even. Our progress in the last twelve months confirms the saying, "If you want something done, find a busy person to do it." I am not sure that all of you busy people truly realize how much you are getting done because there is so little time to pause and reflect. Next year is certain to bring more hard work. Next year will also be different because so many of you are building new relationships among doctors, health departments, hospitals, and others. As recently as this week I attended a meeting of a local health department, a medical practice, and one of the partnerships. All parties were in agreement about what needed to be done, all agreed that the existing rules prevent funding the proper mix of private-public sharing, and all agreed that fundamental changes needed to occur if we are to use the best of both systems. That kind of discussion was unheard of at the operating level last year.

I hope you will take time during the holiday season to reflect on all you have accomplished this year. Every day in your own way you are performing small miracles in dozens of different ways. You may not realize it but you are defining the future of public health in Kentucky. It is

slow and it is agonizing at times but it is happening.

It is an honor to have the opportunity to serve as commissioner for this crazy lovable group of dedicated public health folks doing their part to make things better for all of us. Please enjoy your time off with your families and may God bless all of you.

ACH Anecdotes



WORDS OF WISDOM FOR WOMEN

What is Osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is a debilitating disease in which bones become porous and fragile therefore increasingly susceptible to fractures. Fractures may occur in any bone but typically occur in the hip, spine, and wrist. Osteoporosis is often called a "silent disease" because bone loss causes no symptoms until it is so severe a collapsed vertebrae occurs resulting in severe back pain, loss of height, or spinal deformities such as stooped posture or dowager's hump or results in a hospitalization from a hip fracture.

Over 25 million Americans are affected by osteoporosis making it a **major public health problem**. Osteoporosis is responsible for 1.5 million fractures annually and millions of dollars in related health care costs. By age 75, one-third of all men will be affected by osteoporosis. Women have a 10-25% lower total bone mass at maturity than men, making them at even greater risk. One out of every two women over the age of 50 has an osteoporosis-related fracture. To help put these statistics in perspective, we can look at it this way; a woman's risk of a hip fracture is equal to her **combined** risk of breast, uterine, and ovarian cancer!

Osteoporosis has a long list of risk factors. Thin, small-boned post-menopausal Caucasian and Asian women with a family history of the disease are at the greatest risk. Other important risk factors include smoking, alcohol consumption, taking steroids, advancing age, menopause, little or no weight bearing exercise and a diet chronically low in calcium. Medical conditions that contribute to osteoporosis include

endocrine disorders (hyperthyroidism), rheumatoid arthritis, and immobilization. Estrogen is vitally important for maintaining bone mass in women. Prior to menopause the ovaries normally produce adequate amounts of estrogen. Menopause, either "natural" or surgical, results in a dramatic drop in estrogen levels, as does the woman's protection against osteoporosis. Estrogen replacement therapy is the primary way to protect bone during the years of rapid bone loss immediately following menopause. However, not all post-menopausal women are ideal candidates for hormone replacement or may make a personal choice not to take estrogen supplements.

Ralozifene, a new drug recently approved by the FDA for the prevention of osteoporosis, is an available alternative to traditional estrogen replacement. It is from a new class of drugs called Selective Estrogen Receptor Modulators or SERMs. Ralozifene, like other SERMs, produce some estrogen-like effects including prevention of bone loss and cardiac

disease protection but not to the extent that estrogen does. Unlike estrogens, SERMs do not appear to stimulate uterine or breast tissue and therefore do not increase the risk of uterine or breast cancer.

Other medication alternatives include an FDA approved drug, Alendronate (Fosamax), for the prevention and treatment of osteoporosis. Fosamax is a bisphosphonate compound that inhibits bone breakdown and slows bone removal and has been shown to increase bone density and decrease the risk of hip and spine fractures. Adverse reactions include GI upset, abdominal pain and possible esophageal erosion or ulcer formation. The thyroid hormone, Calcitonin, also slows bone loss, increases spinal bone density, and is prescribed for both men and women already suffering from osteoporosis. Calcitonin is available as an injection or a nasal spray.

Building strong bones, especially before the age of 35, may be the best defense against developing osteoporosis. Prevention includes a balanced diet high in calcium, regular

weight-bearing exercise, and avoidance of smoking and alcohol. Prevention ideally should take place beginning in childhood, particularly with females. Additionally, experts recommend 1000 mg of calcium per day for menopausal women on replacement estrogen and 1500 mg per day for those women not on hormone replacement.

Our role as public health providers is to be an actively involved educator in the prevention, recognition, and treatment of this debilitating disease process on both community and clinical levels. All practitioners should be knowledgeable about osteoporosis and provide routine screening and counseling for our patients. For further information contact the National Osteoporosis Foundation in Washington, D.C. at 202-223-2226, FAX 202-223-2237, or web site <http://www.nof.org>.

- *submitted by Trisha Mullins, Certified Nurse-Midwife, Women's Health Consultant*

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Central Office Comments

Rep. Paul Mason, known as a Champion of the Needy, Dies at 63:

Representative Paul Mason, a state lawmaker known as both a champion of the underprivileged and an expert on public health issues, died at 8:45 p.m. on December 8, 1998 in a Boston hospital.

Mason, a Whitesburg Democrat, came to the House of Representatives in 1987 representing Kentucky's 91st House District, which includes Letcher County and a part of Pike County.

As a veteran Eastern Kentucky lawmaker, Mason was a leader in the fight to pass legislation aimed at preventing the spread of AIDS. Mason's daughter, Belinda Mason, died of the disease in 1991 at the age of 33 after she was infected through a blood transfusion following childbirth.

Mason, who was re-elected to the House in November, went to Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston last month for pancreatic surgery. On Friday, December 4, while still at the hospital, Mason suffered a brain aneurysm. His condition deteriorated until he died Tuesday.

A former property valuation administrator in Letcher County, Mason owned a car dealership.

House Speaker Jody Richards, D-Bowling Green, said Mason will be remembered as a champion for the poor and sick.

"Paul Mason was always the first to call attention to the needs of the poorest Kentuckians," Richards said. "His integrity and determination to tackle some of the toughest issues in the Legislature have made Kentucky a better state. We'll miss his friendship, we'll miss his compassionate heart, and we'll always remember his courageous struggle to make sure that no member of society was forgotten."

Public Health has lost a dear friend and advocate. His tireless efforts on behalf of the disadvantaged have resulted in improved programs all across the state.

Mason's survivors include his wife, Peggy Mason; two sons, Nick Mason and Mark Mason; and his mother, Hattie Mason.

Epi Epistles

CORRECTION: Four "Epi" Rapid Response Team Members Celebrate Tenth Anniversaries:

The "Epi" Rapid Response Team was formed in 1987 to assist with the investigation and control of disease outbreaks which periodically occur across the state. Its membership of trained "Responders" now stands at 76 members. New members can be added to the roster through participation in a rigorous training course given by the

Division of Epidemiology and Health Planning or by carrying out an epidemiologic investigation under Division supervision. Except for the ten state staff, all the members are employed by local health departments and receive no additional compensation for team duties.

On September 23, the "Epi" Rapid Response Team Annual Conference was held at KY Dam Village State Resort Park. Four members of the team were recognized for their contributions and accomplishments in the areas of prevention and investigation of communicable diseases for the past ten years.

*Please pardon the oversight of this publication for not mentioning the names of the team members who were recognized for their ten years on the "Epi" Rapid Response Team. They are **Rick Molohon, RS – Lincoln Trail, Lloyd Penniston, RS – North Central, Anita Tackett, RN – WEDCO, and Sarah Wells, RS – Green River.***

We on the team thank them and congratulate them for all they have done in the area of communicable disease control and prevention during the past ten years.

-submitted by Peggy Wright and Barbara Sonnen, Division of Epidemiology and Health Planning

PHPS Passages

Senate Bill 18, The "Straight Pipe" Bill:

Enacted this past legislative session, the Straight Pipe Bill is already improving the quality of life for many Kentuckians by improving water quality and public health safety. Safe drinking water and clean swimmable lakes and streams are critical to the prevention of waterborne disease.

The bill assures that all new construction will have approved sewage systems. This eliminates sewage disposed of through a straight pipe into our rivers, lakes, and streams. It also assures that all septic systems installed in Kentucky protect the groundwater, which many Kentuckians use as their primary source of drinking water.

The bill requires anyone building a new home, installing a mobile home, or building any other sewage generating structure to get health department approvals before electricity is provided to it. When a plan for sewage disposal is approved by the local health department the final electrical hookup is approved. This assures that an adequate sewage system can be placed on the site.

Legislators will recall that in the past an approved septic system was not part of the requirements for permanent electrical hookup. Too often a straight pipe carried sewage directly from a residence and into a nearby creek. Also, non-permitted septic systems had construction defects that

compromised the quality of the groundwater nearby.

Some counties are now seeing as many as four times the number of properly installed septic systems. Statewide, the preliminary numbers indicate between a 15 to 30 percent increase in the number of approved septic systems. Accolades go to our Kentucky legislators who had the foresight to pass the Straight Pipe Bill.

- submitted by Mark Hooks and David Klee, Division of Public Health Protection and Safety

Staff Spotlight

The 1999 Troubadours Preview Performance, "Life: One Scene at a Time":

"Life: One Scene at a Time" ... an accurate description of how a teen feels dealing with the day-to-day issues of growing up and the realistic title of the new 1999 performance of the Troubadours Educational Teen Theatre Troupe of the Northern Kentucky Health Department coincide. The free preview performance will be held on Sunday, January 10, 1999 at 2:30 p.m. at the Holmes High School Auditorium, Covington, Kentucky.

The cast of the Troubadours consists of sixteen high school students representing nine Northern Kentucky high schools. Half of the cast are returning cast members. The theatre troupe is under the direction of Artistic Director Deborah Brock-Blanks and the Troubadours Program Coordinator, Brooke Breeze.

Breeze says the primary goal of the Troubadours is to educate youth and adults about teen health issues and to encourage open communication between parents and teens. This season is the 10th anniversary of the Troubadours program which has been viewed by over 18,000 teens and adults.

"Life: One Scene at a Time" will be a 60-minute improvisational performance consisting of eight to ten scenes addressing current teen issues such as adolescent pregnancy, drug/alcohol abuse, sexual responsibility, premarital abstinence, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV, date rape, peer pressure, suicide, violence and decision-making. This year's show incorporates a unique blend of drama, music, dance and illusion through magic. Each year the special talents of individual cast members are drawn upon. Julie Stulz, a four year member from Highlands High School has written three songs that she will perform in various scenes. Another talented member is Ben Harwood, a senior at Lloyd High School. He aspires to be a professional magician one day. Through the use of illusions, his character brings messages to teens that are related to the topics in the show.

All cast members work together to create the various scenes. Reality is portrayed and examined in the performance which not only benefits teens, but gives parents and school officials a glimpse of what is going on in

the lives of teens and the school setting.

"In our fast paced media-saturated society, it is often hard to get preventive messages across to teens in a way that will keep their attention," Breeze said.

"The Troubadours present their messages in ways to which all teens can relate. Because the information is coming from other young people, the audiences tend to pay attention. The Troubadours hope to provide positive and practical ways to help their peers face important teen issues. After each performance the cast members conduct a 'conversation' where audience members are encouraged to ask questions."

The Troubadour Alumni cast is another group which debuted in the fall of 1997 because of community interest and demand. Previous cast members, high school graduates, presented special performances at the Day of Peace Celebration and the World AIDS Day Event in Northern Kentucky.

For further information on the Troubadours or this preview performance, or to schedule a performance, contact Brooke Breeze at **606-341-4264**.

*- submitted by Peggy Patterson,
Northern KY Health Dept.*

Training Tidbits

RTC Training Courses – FY99
The Emory University Regional Training Center, Atlanta, GA, will provide fourteen (14) course offerings during fiscal year 1999

(July 1, 1998 – June 30, 1999). All fourteen (14) offerings along with registration and course content have been forwarded to District Training Contacts and LHD Administrators. Any LHD employee wishing to attend these offerings should contact their District Training Contact or LHD Administrator for course content and registration forms. Course dates, locations, and titles are listed below.

April 23, 1999 Louisville
- Assisting Clients To Change

April 30, 1999 Lexington
- HIV/AIDS Update

May 7, 1999 Frankfort
- Linking Quality Services *

May 14, 1999 Owensboro
- Orientation for New F.P.
 Nurses

May 14, 1999 Louisville
- Adolescent Health Issues

May 21, 1999 Lexington
- Creating An Efficient Clinic

June 4, 1999 Bowling Gr.
- Adolescent Health Issues

June 18, 1999 Morehead
- Postponing Sexual
 Involvement

June 24, 1999 Lexington
- Pharmacology Update for
 Clinicians

June 25, 1999 Lexington
- Current Reproductive Health
 Issues for Clinicians

***DISTANCE LEARNING
EVENT – 4-5 Downlink sites**
**Domestic Violence Training for
RN Licensure Requirements** is
being held at the following sites.
Three (3) CEUs are provided to
attendees.

Feb. 12, 1999 Hazard
Community College

Feb. 17, 1999 Owenton

For registration, please contact
Bob Hurst at 502-564-4990 or
FAX at 502-564-2556.

Video / Audio Tapes ALERT:
If you have any outstanding video
or audiotapes on loan for more
than three weeks, please return
them to me at the address given
in the Editor's Note. Thank you
for your cooperation.

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spotlight nominees, or
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Sandy Williams, Editor
DPH – Training Branch
275 East Main St.
Frankfort, KY 40621
E-mail:
sandya.williams@mail.state.ky.us
502-564-4990
502-564-4553 (FAX)

EDITOR'S HOLIDAY NOTE:
As the year draws to an end,
please accept my sincere
appreciation for your interest,
contributions, and support of this
newsletter. My wish for each of
you is a safe and happy holiday

season. May God bless you all -
Sandy